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SUBJECT: MFA MID-EAST DIRECTOR ON ISRAEL, HIZBOLLAH, SYRIA,
AND LEBANON

Classified By: Acting Political Minister Counselor Andrew R. Young for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S/NF) MFA Middle East Director (Assistant Secretary-equivalent) Patrice Paoli informed POL Minister Counselor June 18 that Amos Gilad, Senior Advisor at the Israeli Ministry of Defense, told French officials June 17 in Paris that Hizbollah's alleged possession of 40,000 rockets is "intolerable." Paoli said that Gilad warned the French that "if the situation doesn't change," then the Israelis will "deal with" the rockets on their own." Paoli explained that Gilad also expressed strong concern about Syria's role in facilitating the delivery of weapons to Hizbollah. "This time when we go after Hizbollah's arsenal," Gilad reportedly said, "we will not tolerate Syrian complicity."

¶2. (S/NF) Paoli said that the French are concerned about Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's public statements insisting that Israel will not return the Golan Heights to Syria. He said that the French suspect Netanyahu has made these statements in public in order to harden support for his position, which, Paoli noted, contradicts Netanyahu's recent statement that he is open to negotiating with Syria "without preconditions." "How do we get Syria to budge," Paoli asked, "if the Golan card is off the table?" He indicated that the French hope to raise this question with Netanyahu during his visit to Paris this week.

¶3. (S/NF) Paoli and MFA DAS Ludovic Pouille, who attended the meeting, stressed that France intends to remain silent and detached while the Government of Lebanon takes shape in Beirut. "We will not get involved, and everything you've read in the press (to the contrary) is false," Pouille insisted, including rumors about that the French now oppose the blocking veto. He also said that reporting from French missions abroad indicates that Damascus will accept Saad Hariri as Prime Minister without an opposition veto, noting that Michel Aoun appears to be more insistent on this issue than are Hizbollah or the Syrians. Pouille also admitted that members of the March 14 Coalition perceived the French as "doing too much for March 8" prior to the elections, and that March 14 leaders complained that the GOF seemed indifferent to a possible victory by March 8. "We gave that impression on purpose," Pouille claimed, in order to emphasize that the most important outcome of this election would be the strengthening of Lebanese democratic institutions. "But obviously we prefer March 14," he said.
BERRY